

4 Dec. 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR: All Records Officers

SUBJECT: Destruction and Retention of CS Information

1. As a Records Officer of the Clandestine Services, you are entrusted with responsibilities which can be fulfilled only by the exercise of judgment and the full utilization of your experience in building and maintaining our records. You are also expected to supervise the work of others within your component whenever they are engaged in matters bearing upon our records, and to make corrections as necessary.

2. It is especially important that you bring mature judgment and professional experience to bear upon the destruction of documents. A recent survey of the destruction program has brought to light a number of ill-considered authorizations for destruction. If a Records Officer authorizes the destruction of information needed in the effective discharge of our duties, or for the sound conduct of operations, his colleagues are apt to question his maturity, judgment, or conscientiousness.

3. Following the recent survey, the Records Committee considered suspending the destruction of all index cards and documents. Such a step, however, might cause us to revert to our earlier lack of discrimination: the retention of almost all documents and the carding of almost all names. In the past, this practice damaged our effort to establish and maintain an efficient central index and a repository of readily retrievable and meaningful documents. We therefore decided against suspension of our destruction procedures. Neither automatic carding and filing, nor automatic destruction is acceptable; only a judicious exercise of the informed judgment of Records Officers and others working with records will insure a proper balance.

4. A short course in CS records, mandatory for all Records Officers, is being organized. A short guide for Records Officers, attached to this memorandum, summarizes points presented in the course in greater detail. You should supplement its use by consultation with other records experts to resolve doubts or to obtain more detailed guidance.

5. A CS Records Review Group (CSRRG) has recently been created under the jurisdiction of the Records Committee. Its primary function

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is to take a second look at actions initiated or authorized by Records Officers regarding the destruction or retention of CS information. By sampling and other techniques this group provides an additional safeguard against the inclusion of the irrelevant and the destruction of the significant, without in any way relieving the Records Officer of his primary responsibility in the exercise of good judgment.

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Chief of Operations

JD/P

Attachment:
Guide for Records Officers

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